

Transitioning to AND in College: The Experiences of Trans* Students

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Supportive Terminology

Transgender , Trans, or Trans*

- An umbrella term for someone whose self-identification or expression challenges traditional notions of “male” and “female” (opposite: cisgender)
- Includes transsexuals (MTF, FTM), crossdressers (not “transvestites”), drag queens and kings, genderqueers, and other gender-diverse identities
- Hundreds of different gender identities: gender-inclusive pronouns

Trans 101

UMass Transgender Information

[**http://www.umass.edu/stonewall/trans/**](http://www.umass.edu/stonewall/trans/)

UC Riverside Educational Materials

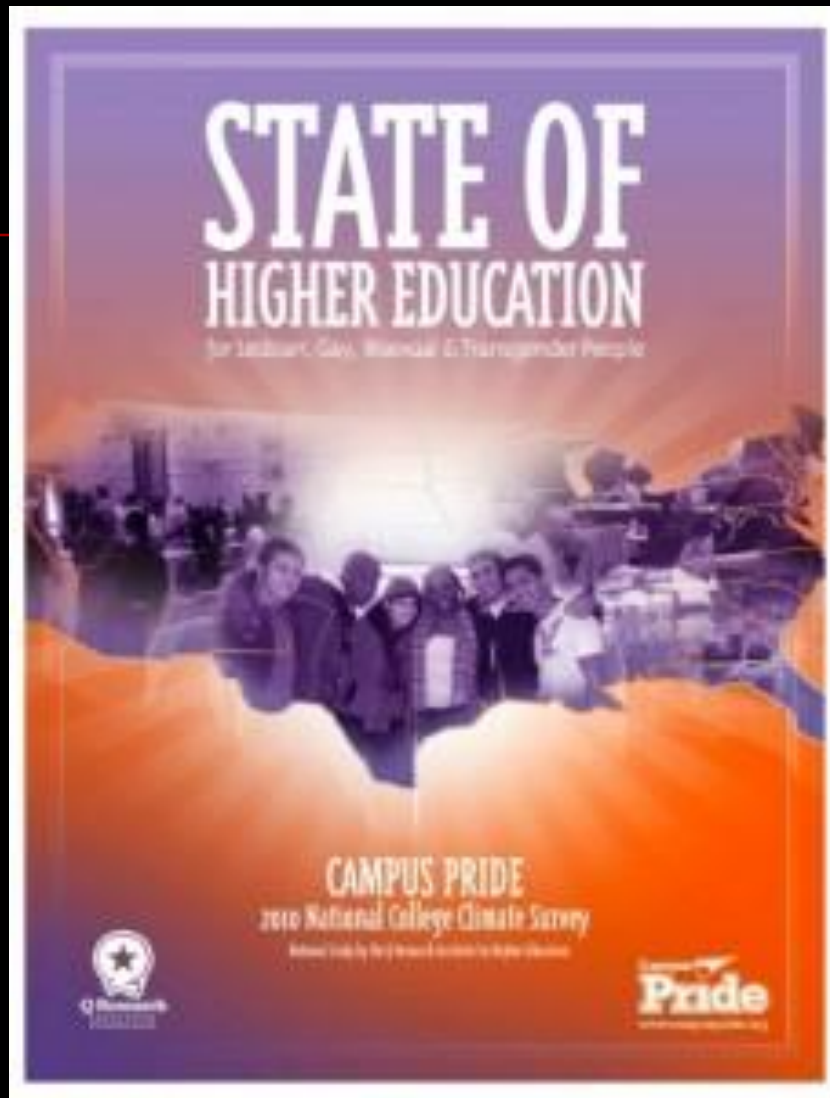
[**http://out.ucr.edu/topics/Pages/HelpfulHandouts.aspx**](http://out.ucr.edu/topics/Pages/HelpfulHandouts.aspx)

Trans@MIT Allies Toolkit

[**http://web.mit.edu/trans/alliestoolkit.html**](http://web.mit.edu/trans/alliestoolkit.html)

Research





State of Higher Education for LGBT People

**Rankin, Blumenfeld,
Weber, & Frazier**

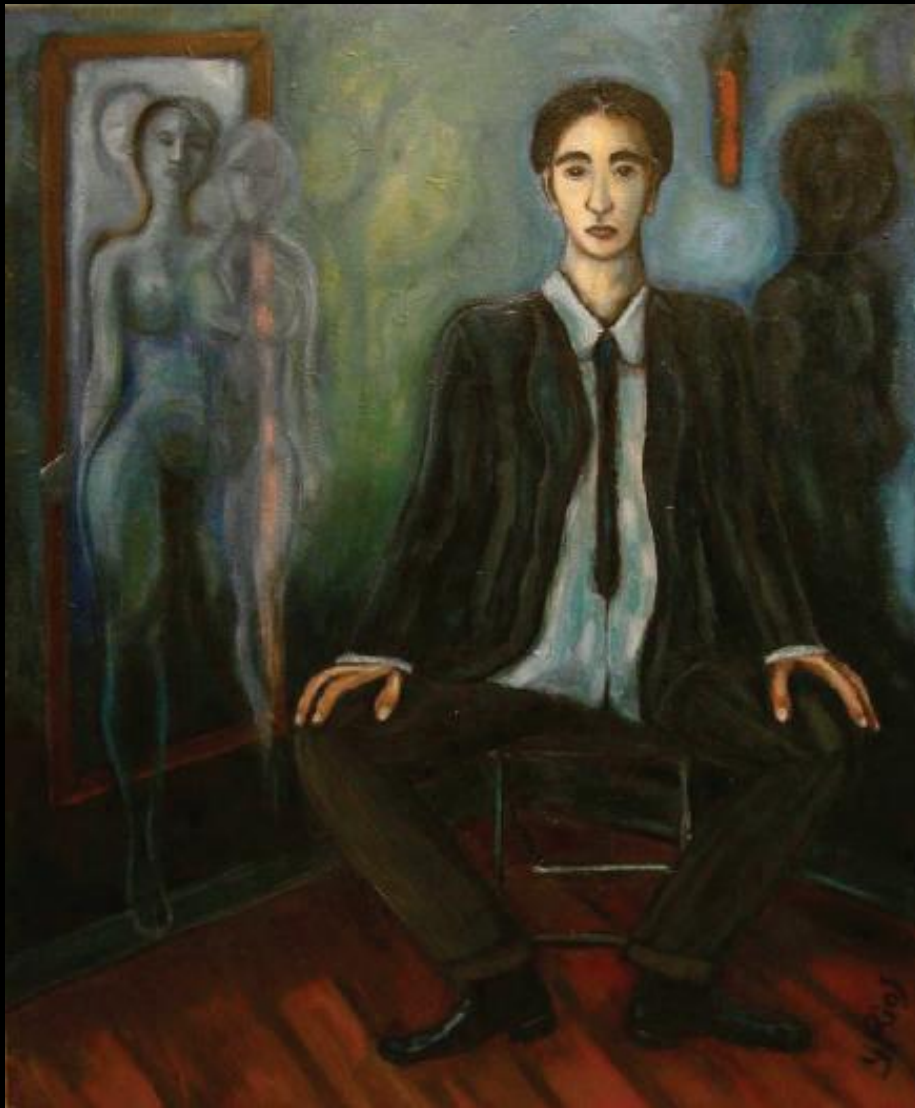
Campus Pride, 2010

Key Findings

- 31-39% of the transmasculine (TM), transfeminine (TF), and gender-nonconforming (GNC) respondents had experienced harassment on campus
- 17-22% of trans-spectrum respondents who had experienced harassment feared for their physical safety on campus
- 65% of the TM students, 55% of the TF students, and 18% of the GNC students who participated in the study avoided disclosure of their gender identity because of a fear of negative consequences

Key Findings

- One-third of trans-spectrum participants have seriously considered leaving their institution because of the negative climate
- More than half of trans-spectrum respondents felt comfortable or very comfortable with the overall campus climate at their institutions



***The Lives of
Transgender
People***

**Genny Beemyn &
Sue Rankin**

**Columbia University
Press, 2011**

Milestone Similarities

Feeling
gender
different from
a young age
and seeking
to express
this difference
through dress
and behavior

Repressing or
hiding these
feelings in the
face of
hostility
and/or
isolation

Recognizing
that there are
transgender
people

Getting to
know about
and know
other
transgender
people

Milestone Similarities

Deciding on a
specific
identity

Overcoming
denial and
internalized
genderism to
accept oneself
as
transgender

Having one's
presentation
match one's
identity

Deciding
whether/when
to tell others
and
developing
new
relationships
after
disclosure

Developing a
sense of
wholeness
within a
gender
normative
society

Trans* College Students Today

- Likely to have had some understanding of their gender difference as children or youth.
- Gender-nonconforming, male-assigned children may have had some support for being gender different.
- Less likely to be in denial or be confused.
- Less likely to misidentify at all or for long.
- Come to college expecting support and resources.

Trans* College Students Today

- Recognize that there is not one way to be transgender.
- May not see the need to have surgeries or take hormones to be a “real” woman or man (or see the need to be a gender at all).
- Typically refuse to accept a gender binary.
- May identify outside of a gender binary and live between the two gender extremes of male and female.
- May want gender-inclusive pronouns used for themselves.

The Genderqueer Age and Gender Divide

- *The Lives of Transgender People*: all genderqueer participants were under age 32; 86.5% assigned female at birth (AFAB)
- *Injustice at Every Turn*: 89% of “gender not listed” between 18-45; 73% AFAB
- Kuper, Nussbaum, Mustanski 2012 (n=292, mean age of 28): 73% of genderqueer participants AFAB

Being an Advocate for Trans* Students



General Best Practices

- Recognize that every person is different and has a unique experience, identity, and needs. Do not make assumptions.
- All students should be respected and have access to support services, programs, and a quality learning environment.
- You do not have to be a trans* person or an expert on trans* issues to support trans* people; trans* people need allies in the same way that all oppressed and marginalized communities need allies.

General Best Practices

- Do not ask trans* people to educate you. Do your own homework and research. Understand that there is a difference between talking to individuals about their preferences/perspectives and forcing someone to be your educator.
- Think about what makes you uncomfortable and why.
- Challenge your own conceptions about gender-appropriate roles and behaviors. Do not expect people to conform to society's beliefs about “women” and “men.”

General Best Practices

- Allies never finish learning. Approach with humility.
- Know your own limits as an ally. Do not be afraid to admit you do not know everything! Listen to trans voices. They are the experts on their own lives.
- Above all, respect and support trans* people in their lives and choices.
- Recognize the intersections of trans* identities with other identities.

For Senior Administrators

- Raise the questions.
- Speak up, but not for.
- Role model language.
- Provide training.
- Improve awareness and skills.
- Increase comfort among staff.
- Challenge gender assumptions.
- If someone makes a trans*-related mistake, gently correct them; if they make an anti-trans* remark, be the brave trans* ally who calls them on it.

Specific Best Policies & Practices

Campus Pride Trans Policy Clearinghouse:

<http://www.campuspride.org/tpc>

***Promising Practices for Inclusion of Gender
Identity/Gender Expression in Higher Education***

<http://architect.lgbtcampus.org>

LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index:

<http://www.campusprideindex.org>

Administrative Documents

- ▼ Add “gender identity or expression” to the college’s main nondiscrimination policy.

More than 670 colleges have trans-inclusive nondiscrimination policies.

- ▼ Enable trans students to self-identify their gender identity, if they choose, on the college’s admissions and/or post-enrollment forms.

“Do you identify as one or more of the following: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer?”

Administrative Documents

- ▼ Enable trans students to have a name other than their legal first name on institutional documents (ID cards, class rosters, directory listings, unofficial transcripts, diplomas, etc.) upon request.
- ▼ Enable trans students to change the gender on their campus records upon request (i.e, without requiring proof that students have modified their bodies or changed their birth certificates).

About 75 colleges have a preferred name option and about 50 have a gender change option.

Facilities

- ▼ Have a written bathroom policy that protects trans students from discrimination.

“Students should use bathrooms that correspond to their sex or gender identity, whichever is safer, or utilize bathrooms that are designated gender-neutral or gender-inclusive.”

- ▼ Have a policy requiring at least one gender-inclusive restroom (a bathroom open to students of all genders) in all newly constructed or significantly renovated buildings, including residence halls.

Facilities

- ▼ Have single-occupancy men's and women's restrooms converted into gender-inclusive ones by installing locks and changing signs.
- ▼ Have gender-inclusive restrooms in at least half of the administrative and academic buildings on campus.
- ▼ Have an online list/map of campus gender-inclusive restrooms.

Facilities



- Offer private locker and shower rooms that are readily available to trans students in campus rec centers and athletic facilities.

Health Services

- ▼ Enable trans students to self-identify on health care forms.
- ▼ Make sure that the campus health and counseling center staff are knowledgeable about the specific needs and experiences of trans students.
- ▼ Offer a support group that assists students in the process of acknowledging and disclosing their trans identities.

Health Services

- ▼ Develop and make available a list of area therapists experienced in working with trans people.
- ▼ Offer a student health insurance policy which covers ongoing counseling, hormones, and gender-affirming surgeries for trans students who need such health care.

At least 46 colleges cover hormones and gender-affirming surgeries for students and 23 cover just hormones.

Housing

- ▼ Enable trans students to self-identify on their housing application.
- ▼ Have a written policy that enables trans students to be housed in keeping with their gender identity/ expression.
- ▼ Provide an LGBT-focused living space, LGBT theme floor, or LGBT/Ally living-learning program.

Housing

- ▼ Offer a gender-inclusive housing (GIH) option (housing in which students are assigned to rooms without regard to gender) that is open to both incoming and returning students.
 - ✓ This option should be separate from an LGBTQ-theme floor.
 - ✓ Recognize that GIH is not the same as trans housing.
 - ✓ It should be offered in different parts of campus and, if possible, in different types of housing (doubles, suites, apartments).

Housing

- ✓ Apartment-style GIH is likely to be the most popular, but shared rooms should also be an option, especially if the apartment-style housing is more expensive.
- ✓ GIH should include gender-inclusive bathrooms/showers.
- ✓ About 150 schools offer some form of GIH.
- ▼ Require residence life staff to regularly offer activities and post educational material to raise residents' awareness of trans experiences.

Organizational Inclusion

- ▼ Develop a policy for trans students to be able to participate in intramurals and rec sports.
- UMass Amherst Policy: "When an activity makes gender designation, individuals may participate in the activity based on their gender identity. If an individual's gender identity does not fit within the binary framework of man/woman or the person is in the process of transitioning to a different gender, participation in a particular gender designated activity will be handled on a case by case basis."
- ▼ Enable trans students to join fraternities and sororities and other gender-segregated campus organizations in keeping with their gender identity.

Education

- ▼ Require all Student Affairs staff, Public Safety officers, and other front-line personnel to regularly attend a training session about trans topics.
- ▼ Incorporate gender identity topics into orientation sessions for new students, staff, and faculty.
- ▼ Have an online campus resource guide for new and prospective trans students.
- ▼ Regularly sponsor trans speakers, performers, and other programs.

Questions and Discussion

- What trans-supportive policies are you pursuing at your institution?
- What challenges have you encountered?
- What has been successful?

- Other questions?
- Thoughts?

Further Questions?

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